

Problem-Based Learning Activity

Suggestions for Classroom Implementation

Problem-Based Situation Relating to the Aspect of **Finance**

Assignment to students: You have just graduated from high school and have found a great job. You must have a car, however, to get to work. Your friend has just purchased a foreign car and wants you to do the same. Your parents want you to buy an American car. You want to make a logical decision. Choose an American-made car and an imported car to compare. Investigate the advantages and disadvantages of the two cars including the costs of ownership (i.e., insurance, gas, and registration, as well as the price of the car) safety, repair, maintenance, and depreciation records, as well as gas mileage. Create a table in which you compare the two so that your friend and parents will know that you arrived at your decision logically.

Note that the situation deals with making a logical decision about the purchase of a new car—an ideal topic for high school students. This could be an individual or team assignment. It requires research which could be an Internet search; and an interview component (with a local automobile dealer or insurance agent) could be included. The situation lists the costs of ownership that could be used as research criteria. Presentations to the class could be as simple as an Excel table and chart to illustrate the comparison. Or the assignment could involve a PowerPoint presentation of the research findings. Students will be very interested to learn what kind of car classmates have chosen—and why.

Scoring Guide for Presentation

Category	4 Points	3 Points	2 Points	1 Point
Content	Shows a full understanding of the topic.	Shows a good understanding of the topic.	Shows a good understanding of parts of the topic.	Does not seem to understand the topic very well.
Posture and Eye Contact	Stands up straight, looks relaxed and confident. Establishes eye contact with everyone in the room during the presentation.	Stands up straight and establishes eye contact with everyone in the room during the presentation.	Sometimes stands up straight and establishes eye contact.	Slouches and/or does not look at people during the presentation
Collaboration with Peers	Almost always listens to, shares with, and supports the efforts of others in the group. Tries to keep people working well together.	Usually listens to, shares with, and supports the efforts of others in the group. Does not cause "waves" in the group.	Often listens to, shares with, and supports the efforts of others in the group but sometimes is not a good team member.	Rarely listens to, shares with, and supports the efforts of others in the group. Often is not a good team member.
Preparedness	Student is completely prepared and has obviously rehearsed.	Student seems pretty prepared but might have needed a couple more rehearsals.	The student is somewhat prepared, but it is clear that rehearsal was lacking.	Student does not seem at all prepared to present.

Problem-Based Situation Relating to the Aspect of **Community Issues**

Assignment to students: You are a member of a community committee that is responding to the mayor's suggestion that a sports complex be constructed in your neighborhood. People in this neighborhood are very concerned that this sports complex will cause a lot of additional problems including increased traffic, crime, and noise. On the other hand, many neighbors see that this facility would have a positive economic effect. You have been elected to prepare a report listing alternative suggestions to help alleviate the fears of the community. You are to present this report at a community meeting next month.

This situation could be adapted to fit any community, and represents an issue that could involve interesting perspectives on the part of students. This could be an interesting group project involving community research to address positive and negative aspects of the new facility. The class could be divided into several teams—each preparing a report to present to the community meeting. Community leaders could be invited to listen to reports of alternative suggestions and provide feedback to students. The scoring guide for this activity should include product and process--presentation skills (PowerPoint and oral) as well as the process involved by students to compile suggestions for the proposed sports complex.

Another variation of this situation could include teams to represent different factions of the community:

1. Team representing citizens of the community who decide to share their points of view (against the proposal) in a letter to the editor of the local newspaper.
2. Team representing the local Chamber of Commerce who are focused on the economic impact of the proposed sports complex and present those facts in an ad for the local newspaper.
3. Team representing parents of young athletes who choose to present their arguments in a flyer to be distributed throughout the community.

This assignment would be an excellent opportunity for students to establish the parameters of their assignment and research then plan how the project will be constructed. This assignment is also provides an excellent opportunity for students to determine the criteria to be used in evaluating their work.

Problem-Based Situation Relating to the Aspect of **Personal Work Habits**

Assignment to students: Many employees report late for work each day. This is true at all levels of the organization including salaried, managerial, and hourly workers. As an employee in the human resources section of the company, your manager has asked you to prepare a report which addresses this problem. She/he asked you to think of several ways to reduce the tardiness of employees. You must present your findings to groups of employees. Prepare a report including three or four ideas that might encourage employees to come to work on time.

This is a realistic issue for students to address. It provides an excellent opportunity to invite managers/human resource personnel to share expectations of the business works regarding attendance and punctuality. Students could be asked to apply this learning to school and classes (if that is an issue).

Scoring Guide for Activity

Category	4 Points	3 Points	2 Points	1 Point
Contributions	Routinely provides useful ideas when participating in the group and in classroom discussion. A definite leader who contributes a lot of effort.	Usually provides useful ideas when participating in the group and in classroom discussion. A strong group member who tries hard!	Sometimes provides useful ideas when participating in the group and in classroom discussion. A satisfactory group member who does what is required.	Rarely provides useful ideas when participating in the group and in classroom discussion. May refuse to participate.
Problem Solving	Actively looks for and suggests solutions to problems.	Refines solutions suggested by others.	Does not suggest or refine solutions, but is willing to try out solutions suggested by others.	Does not try to solve problems or help others solve problems. Lets others do the work.
Attitude	Never is publicly critical of the project or the work of others. Always has a positive attitude about the task(s).	Rarely is publicly critical of the project or the work of others. Often has a positive attitude about the task(s).	Occasionally is publicly critical of the project or the work of other members of the group. Usually has a positive attitude about the task(s).	Often is publicly critical of the project or the work of other members of the group. Often has a negative attitude about the task(s).
Working with Others	Almost always listens to, shares with, and supports the efforts of others. Tries to keep people working well together.	Usually listens to, shares with, and supports the efforts of others. Does not cause "waves" in the group.	Often listens to, shares with, and supports the efforts of others, but sometimes is not a good team member.	Rarely listens to, shares with, and supports the efforts of others. Often is not a good team player.

Source for Rubrics: <http://rubistar.4teachers.org/index.php>